

VZCZCXRO6636  
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN  
DE RUEHSB #0039/01 0141423  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 141423Z JAN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3920  
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2546  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 2668  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1161  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1937  
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 2292  
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2717  
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 5145  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1828  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 000039

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH  
DRL FOR N. WILETT  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU  
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS  
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN  
TREASURY FOR D. PETERS AND T.RAND

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)  
SUBJECT: NO END IN SIGHT TO HARARE'S WATER PROBLEMS

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

¶1. (SBU) Harare's water and sewer systems are antiquated and can no longer cope with the city's expansion. The problems worsened in 2006 when the Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) took over the administration of water and sewer reticulation from the city of Harare. In recent years, intermittent power supplies, treatment chemical shortages, and low investment levels in the sector have resulted in a near collapse of the system, culminating in the recent outbreak of cholera. Given the relative success recorded in Bulawayo, where the city council is responsible for water distribution, a return of water and sewer reticulation responsibility to the Harare city council offers the best hope for the current problems to be eased. Without significant capital investment, however, supply will fail to meet demand. END SUMMARY.

-----  
Water Delivery Steadily Worsening  
-----

¶2. (SBU) Harare's water delivery system has steadily degraded over the past 10 years to the point that now both affluent and poor neighborhoods are either not receiving water, or only receiving intermittent supplies. Wealthier residents have long since resorted to deep wells, while the less fortunate rely on sporadic piped water, shallow wells, or even standing pools. The government is wholly incapable of dealing with the problem. This incapacity was highlighted on December 1 when the government was forced to close down the main pumping station, cutting off water to the entire city, including the central business district. By midday most companies and government departments had sent workers home for lack of water.

13. (SBU) According to Bernard Poko, the operations manager of ZINWA, Harare's water problems reflect a mismatch between insufficient supply and growing demand for water due to years of under-investment in the sector and the rapid geographic expansion of Harare's city limits. Engineer Poko told econ specialist on December 5, 2008 that, even when pumping at full capacity with adequate supplies of treatment chemicals, the waterworks can only produce 600 mega liters (ML) of water per day, compared with current demand of 1,000 ML per day. He said that the waterworks are currently pumping well below capacity, although production levels vary daily depending on availability of electricity, chemicals, and spare parts. Poko said that the creation of new Harare suburbs such as ZimRe Park, Kuwadzana Extension, and Sunway City, had exceeded the capacity of Harare's waste disposal and water reticulation delivery systems.

---

ZINWA Bears Brunt of Blame

---

14. (SBU) Harare's water problems worsened when ZINWA took over the administration of water and sewer reticulation from the municipality in December 2006. Previously residents had never endured months without running water. According to Simbarashe Moyo, the Chairman of the Combined Harare Residents Associations (CHRA), ZINWA lacks both the financial

HARARE 00000039 002 OF 004

and technical capacity to manage the mammoth task at hand. A simple repair to a pump requires a financial allocation from ZINWA's parent ministry, the Ministry of Water Resources and Development. This degree of bureaucracy has led to the popular perception that ZINWA is inept.

15. (SBU) By contrast, in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, the city council is still responsible for providing water to residents and, except during periods of drought, water interruptions are rare. A well connected Bulawayo-based businessman, Robert Sigauke, commented to econ specialist that the city council made water decisions in a timely and efficient manner. Additionally, the Bulawayo council receives considerable third-party donations from international NGOs, unlike the parastatal ZINWA.

16. (SBU) The Deputy Minister of Water Resources and Development, Walter Mzembi told polecon chief on January 8 that ZINWA had taken over from the Harare council because Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe and other ZANU-PF leaders believed water was a national asset to be managed by the government. Mzembi said this was a mistake; there could be national ownership, but efficient delivery systems were possible only with local control. He noted he had made this point in a recent meeting with Mugabe, and he was hopeful there would be a change in policy.

---

There is an Acute Shortage of Chemicals...

---

17. (SBU) Poko told us that water production is determined by the availability of chemicals to treat the raw reservoir water. While some of the chemicals are imported and require payment in foreign currency, the main chemical, aluminum sulphate, is locally produced by the government-owned company Zimphos. Poko told us that Zimphos cannot meet ZINWA's need for 140 tons per day. In contrast, Rongai Makwavarara, the operations manager at Zimphos, said the plant could produce up to 200 tons of aluminum sulphate per day. Makwavarara attributed ZINWA's lack of adequate stocks of chemicals to the parastatal's failure to pay for the product on time.

18. (SBU) Embassy contacts informed us that UNICEF began a

four-month program in December to supplement water treatment chemicals to urban centers, including Harare. The practice of trucking water is extremely expensive and is only used as a last resort in response to emergency conditions.

-----  
...and Power  
-----

¶9. (SBU) Engineer Poko also said that water production is limited by power outages due to the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority's inability to either produce or import sufficient electricity for the country's needs. He conceded that power shortages had not been a major problem at the waterworks in the past four weeks.

-----  
Pumps Are Obsolete and Pipes Worn Out  
-----

¶10. (SBU) Poko also said that ZINWA water production has been constrained by breakdowns caused by the age of Harare's water reticulation system and lack of investment. The pumping equipment at both the Morton Jaffrey waterworks and the different distribution water mains around Harare are over

HARARE 00000039 003 OF 004

50 years old and well past their useful economic life. The situation is worsened by the lack of foreign currency for spare parts. As a result, there are constant breakdowns.

¶11. (SBU) Poko added that the age of the pipes is giving rise to the loss of treated water through numerous leaks in and around Harare. Mzembi told us that ZINWA loses up to half of all treated water through pipe bursts. According to Mzembi, just last week nearly 300 pipe bursts were reported to ZINWA. Poko told us that replacing the pumping equipment without laying new pipes would result in even more leaks, as the old pipes could not withstand the increased pressure from new pumping equipment. Although he said that replacing pumps and pipes would have cost Z\$45 billion (about US\$9 million at the time) in January 2007, he was unwilling to provide cost estimates at current prices.

-----  
Low Capital Investment  
-----

¶12. (SBU) Poko told us that resolution of these problems would require a large capital injection. However, in view of the current economic crisis, the government cannot afford the outlay, and he does not expect water supplies to improve. He added that because water fees have been held constant over the past seven months, they are completely eroded by hyperinflation. However, he does not believe that low water fees are wholly responsible for the low capital investment. He told us that in the 1980s and 1990s investment in water in Zimbabwe came from donors, including the WorldBank. (NOTE: Poko told economic specialist on January 8 that ZINWA has now been allowed to charge commercial clients in foreign currency while residential consumers will continue to pay in Zimbabwe dollars. END NOTE.)

¶13. (SBU) As a result of not paying competitive salaries, the parastatal has experienced a massive exodus of skilled workers. Poko said that the few experienced workers who remain are doing their best under difficult conditions.

-----  
Coping Strategies  
-----

¶14. (SBU) Harare's water woes have forced residents to devise a number of coping strategies including the use of shallow wells in high-density areas and boreholes--deep wells--in more affluent suburbs. According to Poko, the use

of shallow wells is one of the major factors contributing to the current outbreak of cholera in Harare. To stop people from using shallow wells, ZINWA, with the help of UNICEF, trucked water to residents of areas that have a high prevalence of cholera, such as Glen View and Budiriro. Poko told us that in addition to the use of tank trucks, ZINWA also connects taps to some water points for use by residents during the day but removes them at night for fear of vandalism.

¶15. (SBU) Poko told us that the cholera outbreak forced government to set up a ministerial committee on December 1, 2008 charged with providing residents with clean water. He said the committee was busy looking for resources to purchase chemicals and called for impromptu meetings on almost a daily basis to review progress. According to Poko, progress will be limited because the committee is not able to conduct the complete overhaul required.

-----

HARARE 00000039 004 OF 004

COMMENT

-----

¶16. (SBU) The government of Zimbabwe has been grossly derelict in its duty to provide its residents with drinkable water, resulting in the cholera crisis that has claimed almost 2,000 lives nationwide and about 400 in Harare/Chitungwiza. Perhaps most egregious was the politically-motivated decision to take control of water delivery from local councils, thereby capturing water revenues and exerting ZANU-PF control over yet another resource. The relative success of cities that managed to hang onto their own water management--such as Bulawayo and Masvingo--highlights ZINWA's failure and should provide a compelling argument that control must be returned to local councils. END COMMENT.

MCGEE